



## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2021

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members representing 168 towns and cities.

### **SB 948      An Act Addressing Education Funding And Racial Equity In Connecticut**

CCM **supports** SB 948 as it would make changes to address education financial equity by: (a) accelerating the phase-in schedule of the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula to be fully funded by FY 2022; (b) revise the formula used to calculate a town's equalization aid grant by increasing the weight for English language learners and increasing the concentrated poverty weight, and reducing the concentrated poverty threshold; (b) replace the existing funding levels for interdistrict magnet schools, state charter schools, regional agricultural science and technology education centers, and the open choice program with a new weighted funding amount per pupil based on student need; and (c) repeals the charging of tuition for interdistrict magnet schools and regional agricultural science and technology education centers.

The current mechanism to provide education funding are inadequate and inequitable to meet the needs of Connecticut's student population. A particular drawback of the current system is that it fails to account for a student-based approach to ensure racial equity amongst school districts throughout the state are in place to improve the outcomes for all students.

The current educational finance system is overly reliant on local property tax revenue. In the country, Connecticut is one of the state's most reliant on the local property tax to fund public education. The cost for public education in our state is over \$12.3 billion and municipal property taxpayers fund 53.3% of that amount (\$6.6 billion), with the State and federal governments providing the balance. As a result, our system does not consider the vast disparities of wealth and student needs. More specifically, the formula does not account for the needs of English Learners. In recent years, the student population consisting of English Learners has grown substantially. Unfortunately, public policy has failed to address this trend.

CCM is supportive of SB 948 as it would not only accelerate the fully funding of the ECS, but also expand the ECS formula to give greater consideration for English Learners and those students in districts with concentrated poverty. In making these adjustments, while this proposal will have a greater impact on some districts than others, the bill maintains the commitment of phasing out those district that will see funding declines so that they can be absorbed during a reasonable period of time.

In addition, as education funding has been associated with complex formulas and grants, the bill attempts to streamline the process to create a uniform formula that will be based on the needs of students within a district. Not only will this enhance equity in education finance, but also improve predictability and transparency.

SB 948 is a bold attempt to address the inequities of Connecticut's current education finance system that is long overdue. Therefore, CCM urges the Committee to **favorably report SB 948**.

★★★★

If you have any questions, please contact Mike Muszynski, State and Federal Relations Manager of CCM at [mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org](mailto:mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org) or 203-500-7556.